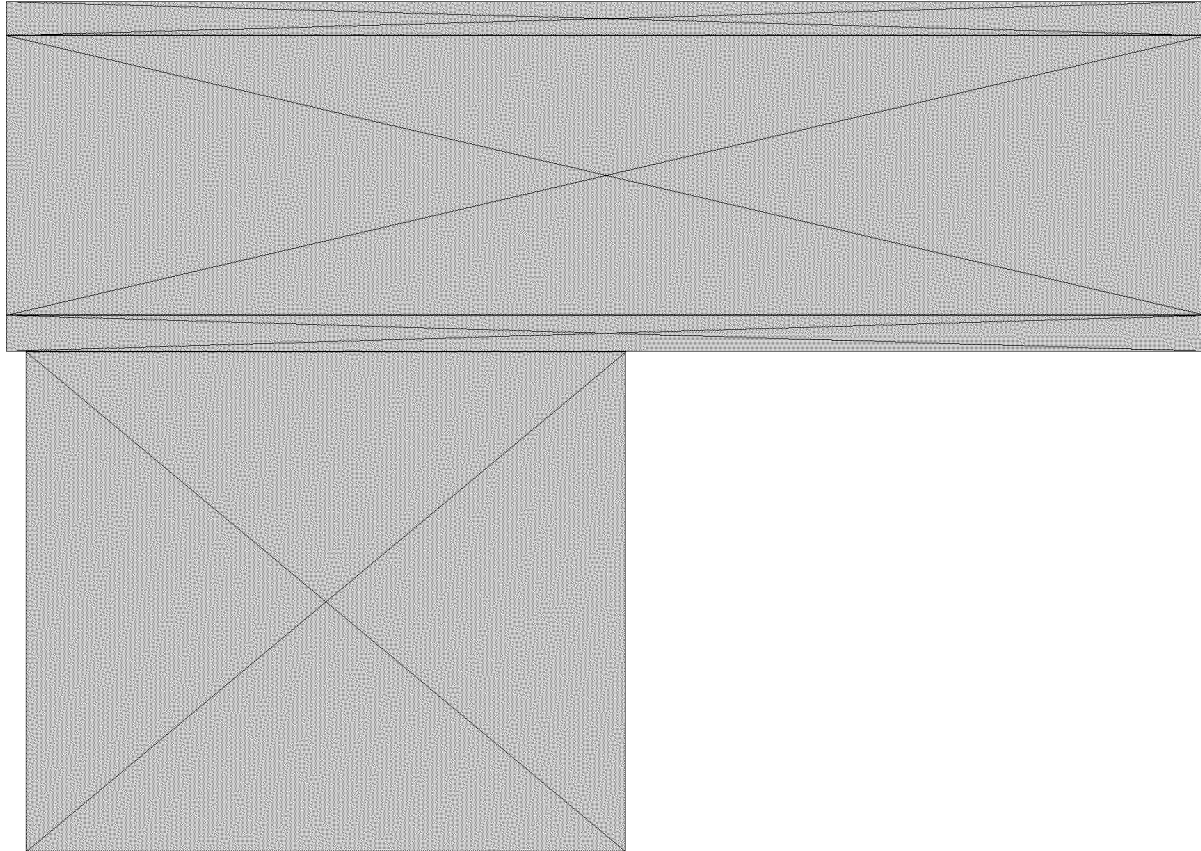


To: Grantham, Nancy[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov]
From: EnergyGuardian
Sent: Thur 9/17/2015 9:38:30 PM
Subject: Crude export bill headed to House floor, White House showdown

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Energy and environment headlines for the afternoon of Thursday, September 17, 2015



Crude export bill headed to House floor, White House showdown

By Kevin Rogers

Congressional Republicans kept up the momentum in their fight to lift the decades-old ban on crude oil exports as the Energy and Commerce Committee sent the proposal to the House floor, winning the support of only three Democrats and setting the stage for a showdown with the White House.

The bill, authored by Rep. Lou Barton (R-Texas), advanced by a vote of 31 to 19. Majority

Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said earlier this week that the House would move quickly on the bill, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., indicated he plans to move on export legislation, too.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest on Tuesday said that the Obama administration opposes the bill, contending that the Commerce Department would decide the fate of the 1975 policy. He said Republicans were merely pandering to oil industry interests.

Barton said Thursday his bill would work to lower fuel prices, expand domestic production, and allow the U.S. to become a stabilizing force in the international oil market.

"If we produce more oil and put some of that in the world market, the world price is going to stabilize or come down," he said. "Conversely, if we don't and drive U.S. producers out of production, then eventually Saudi and OPEC and Russia are going to jack the price back up. If you want to prevent gasoline prices from going back up, vote for this bill."

Most Democrats on the panel stood with the White House and argued that the bill would open the oil floodgates -- leaving few options to close them -- to the benefit of oil companies but the detriment of consumers, the refining industry and the environment.

"H.R. 702 is a blunt object which broadly undermines 40 years of protections for national security, our economy, consumers and the environment," said ranking member Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J. "This bill looks backwards rather than even considering the possibility of developing new energy solutions for our nation's future."

Others warned that the bill's prohibition on any new restrictions on crude exports would make it impossible to shut down pipelines during environmental emergencies.

"Under current law, the secretary of transportation has authority to shut down a crude oil pipeline if it poses a threat to life, property or the environment," Rep. Lois Capps, D-Calif., said. "If an oil pipeline leading to an export terminal were in imminent danger of rupturing, would the secretary still have the authority to shut down the line, or would that action be considered a restriction on exporting crude oil under this bill?"

Rep. Gene Green, D-Texas, a supporter of the bill, sought to alleviate some concerns about export restrictions, successfully attaching an amendment that would allow the president to restrict exports during emergencies. Pallone, however, said the bill was too damaged by fixes with "patches."

Barton supported the amendment, though he said the bill's original language respected existing laws allowing emergency export controls.

Amendments to require studies on the impact of regulations on the refining industry and the potential maritime costs of oil shipments to allies were withdrawn.

Some Democrats who voted no in committee said they could be persuaded to support the bill.

with certain updates

Rep. Bobby Rush, D-Ill., said he would look to tie the policy shift to opportunities for minority-owned businesses. Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., said he could support exports that are focused on assisting allies in Europe.

Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif., who is not on the committee, wrote to members asking that their bill require that any crude exports be carried on "ships built in American shipyards and sailed under American flags by highly experienced officers and crews."

His proposal was not considered, and Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., who opposes lifting the export ban, argued that the committee didn't have jurisdiction over maritime law. But Eshoo said Garamendi made "excellent points" on how the ban should be lifted.

Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore., who supports the bill, predicted that, as it moves through Congress, Democrats will be able to add provisions supporting renewable energy and addressing climate change.

"This isn't going to be the last word. This will go to the Senate. The Senate will amend this bill," he said. "But we've got to move the bill to get to that point in time."

The vote drew praise from the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

"Today, the 40-year-old ban acts only to prevent American companies from competing on an equal playing field in the very global market that sets the prices driving their business," President and CEO Barry Russell said in a statement. "We should not allow U.S. producers to remain at a competitive disadvantage by limiting trade access to global markets."

But Consumers and Refiners United for Domestic Energy said the bill "undermines our nation's energy independence."

"We are disappointed that the committee continued its hasty push of this bill through the legislative process," Executive Director Jay Hauck said in a statement. "As members of the Energy and Commerce Committee rightly noted, exporting crude oil will raise prices on American consumers and businesses and harm our national security."

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Earth's record streak of record heat keeps on sizzling

By Seth Borenstein

WASHINGTON (AP) — Earth's record-breaking heat is sounding an awful lot like a broken record.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Thursday that August, this past summer and the first eight months of 2015 all smashed global records for heat.

That's the fifth straight record hot season in a row and the fourth consecutive record hot month. Meteorologists say 2015 is a near certainty to eclipse 2014 as the hottest year on

record. This year, six of the eight months have been record breaking, with only April and January failing to set new records.

Since 2000, Earth has broken monthly heat records 30 times and seasonal heat records 11 times. The last time a monthly cold record was broken was in 1916. Records go back to 1880.

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New Jersey seeks to block appeal in Exxon settlement

By The Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — A New Jersey court considering whether to let environmental groups and a Democratic state senator intervene in the state's \$225 million settlement with Exxon Mobil should block their efforts, the governor's administration said in a court filing this week.

Gov. Chris Christie's administration moved Wednesday to block environmental groups, which include Clean Water Action, Delaware Riverkeeper, Environment New Jersey and New Jersey Sierra Club, and state Sen. Ray Lesniak, from intervening in the state's settlement with the Irving, Texas-based oil company in the 11-year-old case.

A similar motion to intervene was denied before the settlement approval last month. The administration argued the circumstances have not changed.

"Nothing has changed since the court issued that opinion, except that the court now has had a full opportunity to weigh (the groups' and Lesniak's) objections to the settlement and determine that none of them warrant disapproval (of the settlement)," the state argued in its brief.

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New Mexico official: EPA kept water data secret after spill

By Matthew Brown

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Federal officials refused to share water-quality data for weeks following a blowout of toxic wastewater from a Colorado mine that fouled rivers across the Southwest, New Mexico's top environmental regulator said Thursday.

The move by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency aimed to downplay the severity of the spill, hobbling the state's response, said Ryan Flynn, New Mexico secretary of Environment.

His criticisms, aired before a U.S. House committee investigating the Aug. 5 accident, offered more fodder for congressional Republicans eager to find fault with a federal agency they perceive as having an anti-business agenda.

An EPA cleanup team accidentally triggered the 3 million-gallon spill as it was doing excavation work on the inactive Gold King mine near Silverton, Colorado. The plume turned the Animas River there a sickly mustard yellow color, and the pollution tainted with heavy metals flowed downstream to New Mexico and Utah.

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Democrats defeat latest GOP effort on Iran nuclear deal

By Erica Werner

WASHINGTON (AP) — A last-ditch GOP attempt to derail the Iran nuclear deal failed in the Senate Thursday, and defeated Republicans said they would move on and leave the fight against the Iran accord to the next president.

Senators voted 53-44 to block a measure preventing the Obama administration from lifting sanctions against Iran unless the country recognizes Israel as a state and releases American hostages. A second vote, on a disapproval resolution against the deal, also fell short, on a 56-42 vote. In both cases, 60 votes were needed to advance to final passage but minority Democrats largely held together to prevent it.

Two previous votes in recent days against the Iran deal produced similar outcomes. Democrats were even more united Thursday, as several who oppose the Iran deal nonetheless voted with their party on one of the measures, rejecting attempts by the GOP majority to use the issue to political advantage.

"This cynical tactic is a waste of the Senate's time," Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., complained on the Senate floor, contending that lawmakers should instead be working on legislation to fund the government and prevent a partial shutdown ahead of a Sept. 30 deadline.

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Cheaper oil lowers US current account deficit in 2nd quarter

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By Christopher S. Rugaber

WASHINGTON (AP) — Cheaper oil imports and greater U.S. exports lowered the deficit in the broadest measure of U.S. trade in the April-June quarter.

The Commerce Department said Thursday that the current account deficit shrank to \$109.7 billion, down from \$118.3 billion in the first quarter. The current account tracks not only trade in goods and services but also investment flows.

Falling oil prices helped reduce the value of oil imports, lowering the trade deficit to \$130 billion from \$134.3 billion in the first quarter. Exports of goods and services increased to \$564.7 billion from \$561.7 billion.

The trade gap was a big drag on growth in the first three months of the year, when the economy barely expanded. But the smaller deficit in the second quarter contributed to a much faster expansion.

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A message from the American Petroleum Institute

America is now the world's #1 natural gas producer and will soon be #1 in oil. Now more than ever, abundant energy means abundant prosperity, opportunity and security for all Americans.

[Learn more at EnergyTomorrow.org](http://EnergyTomorrow.org)

David Letterman to take part in series about climate change

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — David Letterman will return to TV next year to help draw attention to the effects of climate change when he appears on an episode of "Years of Living Dangerously."

The National Geographic Channel series, which Thursday was renewed for a second season, has signed Letterman for his first announced appearance since leaving his job hosting CBS' "Late Show."

Fellow correspondents will include Ty Burrell, James Cameron, Don Cheadle, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Olivia Munn, Ian Somerhalder and Cecily Strong, among others.

Each will give first-person accounts of conditions at locations from across the planet where the effects of climate change are most prevalent.

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7 firms, 133 people named suspects in Indonesia forest fires

By The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian police said Thursday they have identified seven companies and 133 individuals suspected of causing forest fires that are spreading choking smoke and polluted air across parts of western Indonesia and neighboring Malaysia and Singapore.

National Police spokesman Col. Suharsono said 27 more companies and 85 individuals are still under investigation by police in six provinces in Sumatra and Kalimantan on the Indonesian part of Borneo.

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has ordered law enforcement agencies to take "stern actions" including revoking forest concessions and blacklisting those responsible for the fires so the haze does not occur again.

"We are ashamed because we should be able to prevent it easily by using all our efforts and ability," he said.

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Week in Review – House Panel Oks Lifting Oil Export Ban

Gasoline Consumption Measure Fails in California.

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OPEC predicts slow oil price recovery

Crude prices will increase no more than \$5 a barrel annually for the rest of this decade, returning oil to the \$80 level by 2020, according to a draft update for an OPEC midterm strategy report, Reuters reports.

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Oil down despite Fed rate decision

The Federal Reserve decision Thursday not to raise interest rates helped support oil prices at the end of a see-saw trading day, but an analyst told Marketwatch that oversupply means “fundamentals are still bearish.” West Texas Intermediate crude settled 25 cents lower at \$46.90 a barrel on the Nymex, while in London, Brent dropped 67 cents, or 1.4 percent, to \$49.08.

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Junior creditors to get equity as Samson files for bankruptcy

Weighed down by more than \$3.25 billion in red ink, Samson Resources Corp. has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, with a plan to give junior creditors a share in the company in return for forgiving debt, The Wall Street Journal reports.

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Crude slump to start triggering M&A moves?

A prominent analyst believes low crude oil prices will prompt a surge of merger and acquisition activity in the industry late this year and into next, FuelFix reports.

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Yieldco, cash flow troubles hitting NRG

NRG Energy and its affiliated “yieldco” will face investors on a call Friday, as the companies deal with the deteriorating yieldco environment and sagging stock prices, The Wall Street Journal reports.

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Clinton against House measure to lift export ban

The House bill to lift the longstanding U.S. ban on crude exports would not win approval from Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton as it stands, a campaign spokesperson said Wednesday, The Hill reports.

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Climate allegations distort company history, Exxon says

In a blog post dismissing a widely publicized story, Exxon Mobil said Inside Climate's reporting about the company's knowledge of the impact of carbon emissions on the environment—and its strategy for dealing with it—used “cherry-picked documents” to

“distort” company history.

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Mayor a player as DC jockeying continues over Exelon-Pepco merger

Exelon and Pepco are working on an appeal of Washington D.C. regulators' rejection of their proposed merger, as opponents pressure Mayor Muriel Bowser not to enter into any settlement with the companies, the Washington City Paper reports.

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Settlement with MSHA to cost Murray \$3.3 million

A settlement with the Mine Safety and Health Administration to address 1,753 safety violations at mines acquired from Consol Energy will cost Murray Energy a fine of \$3.3 million, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reports.

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Lawsuit dropped after Denton ditches drilling ban

A Texas Oil & Gas Association lawsuit against the city of Denton was dismissed after both parties agreed to drop the matter following the city's repeal of its ban on drilling, FuelFix reports.

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Upcoming Events

- Sep. 17, Washington: The House Ways and Means Committee to hold a full committee meeting on tax legislation and extenders. 10:30 am , 1100 Longworth.
- Sep. 17, Washington: The House Energy and Commerce Committee to mark up and vote on a bill from Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, to lift the ban on crude oil exports and a bipartisan energy policy reform bill. 10:00 am , 2123 Rayburn.
- Sep. 17, Washington: The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and the House Natural Resources Committee to hold a joint hearing into the Environmental Protection Agency's spill of mine waste into Colorado's Animas River. EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to testify. 10:00 am , 2167 Rayburn.
- Sep. 17, Washington: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to hold a full committee hearing on reauthorization and potential reforms for the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act. National Park Service Deputy Director Peggy O'Dell and Forest Service Associate Chief Mary Wagner to testify. 10:00 am , 366 Dirksen.

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